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TAGS: [NATO](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: RUSSIAN SUPPORT FOR AFGHANISTAN: SORTING THE WHEAT  
FROM THE CHAFF

REF: A. MOSCOW 2895  
[1](#)B. MOSCOW 2687

Classified By: Ambassador Kurt Volker for reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (S/NF) SUMMARY: Russian officials have expressed a willingness to continue cooperation with NATO for Afghanistan (reftels) despite inconsistencies in the Russian message, but have also said all bets on cooperation are off if Georgia is offered NATO membership. Russian Ambassador to NATO Rogozin has focused on the land transit arrangement with NATO in his public comments -- an agreement, which is of only symbolic value without similar agreements with both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Rogozin, however, thus far has ignored NATO's (as well as the United States') growing reliance on Russian sources for 25 percent of the fuel for ISAF and 50 percent for the critical RC South. ISAF has been working to establish a 50/50 split for fuel delivery between Pakistan and Russia to prevent over-reliance on Pakistan as the only source. It is important to maintain the fuel arrangements from Russian sources and any supporting projects, including logistics inter-operability work in the NATO-Russia Council, to reduce our total dependence on Pakistan. In addition to ISAF-wide arrangements, Allies have many bilateral logistical arrangements with Russia; many Allies, including Germany, routinely transit Russian air space to supply their forces. Moreover, sixteen ISAF contributors have a contract a Russian firm in a NATO consortium for airlift to supply their forces in Afghanistan. Fuel sourcing and airlift are done indirectly through private Russian companies -- thus, limiting direct GOR control. We also should consider challenging Moscow to fund Afghan development and infrastructure needs to test the depth of feeling in its assertions of mutual interest in the international community's interest with Kabul. Lastly, donations and deployment of Warsaw Pact equipment from new Allies are dependent on Russian licensing. End Summary.

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RUSSIA SEES AFGHANISTAN IN OUR MUTUAL INTEREST  
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[1](#)2. (S/NF) In an August 25 interview, Zamir Kabulov, the Russian Ambassador to Afghanistan, said the deal with NATO on transit is no longer valid after Russia suspended military cooperation with NATO. Kabulov's statement was immediately contradicted by Dmitriy Rogozin, the Russian Ambassador to

NATO. Rogozin identified Afghanistan as an area in NATO-Russia cooperation that affects Russian highest national interest, but added the caveat "for now." Reporting from Embassy Moscow (reftels) and recent statements by Russia's Foreign Minister Lavrov contending that "Afghanistan is the sphere where our interests coincide and where we must continue to cooperate closely" indicate that Rogozin has won this internal Russian policy debate. However, Rogozin said more recently that offering Georgia membership to NATO would put Russian cooperation for Afghanistan in doubt. In his public comments, Rogozin and other Russian officials focus on the land transit arrangement (and to a lesser extent the air transit) with NATO and tend to ignore the more critical aspects of Russian logistical support to ISAF and OEF, namely fuel.

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TWO LESS THAN STABLE SOURCES ARE BETTER THAN ONE  
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13. (S/NF) In 2005, ISAF transshipped 100 percent through Pakistan. Since then, ISAF has been working to establish a 50/50 split for sources of fuel between Pakistan and Russia to prevent over-reliance on Pakistan as a single source. By June 2008, Russia sourced roughly 25 percent of ISAF fuel overall and 50 percent for RC South. As of September 1, 2008, the U.S. sources 62 percent of its fuel for Bagram Air Field and 100% for the Manas Air Base from Russia. Supreme Site Services ("Supreme"), a company based in Dubai, UAE, supplies the majority of fuel for ISAF, both through Pakistan and from Russia, via Turkmenistan. Supreme buys the Russian source fuel through a contract with BP and moves it via

convoy through Kabul or Herat to Kandahar. Supreme is establishing a commercial fuel reserve near Kabul and Mazur-e-Sharif, but this is only intended to handle a temporary (1-2 weeks) loss of one supply and not for a complete loss of a petroleum source. SHAPE views this as one commercial entity doing business with another. Since the ISAF contract is not directly with a Russian company but with the intermediary, the Russian government has less direct control over the transaction. This arrangement is in the Russian interest since Russian companies are profiting and Russia ostensibly seeks to be viewed as a reliable fuel supplier.

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AIR TRANSIT AND LIFT - ALSO IMPORTANT  
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14. (S/NF) Many Allies transit Russian air space to supply their forces in Afghanistan. For example, Germany transits Russian air space to supply its base in Termez, Uzbekistan to re-supply its forces in RC North. The German mission to NATO told us that this is so important that the German Embassy in Moscow has one officer employed full-time to coordinate overflight clearances. Some Allies, including Norway, Germany, and France, transit Russian air space for personnel flights.

15. (S/NF) Sixteen ISAF contributing countries use Russian and Ukrainian owned aircraft to meet shortfalls in European strategic airlift capabilities. In consortium through the Strategic Airlift Interim Solutions (SALIS) program, NATO countries signed a contract in 2006 with Ruslan SALIS, a subsidiary of the Russian Company Volga-Dnepr. The countries have committed to using the aircraft for a minimum of 2000 flying hours per year. Two AN-124-100 aircraft are on a full-time charter and are drawn from the Russian company, Volga-Dnepr, and the Ukrainian company, ADB.

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LAND TRANSIT - UNREALIZED POTENTIAL  
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16. (S/NF) At the Bucharest Summit, Russia agreed to arrangements for ISAF to ship non-lethal supplies through Russia, but so far NATO cannot take advantage of the

agreement without similar arrangements from both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The NATO International Staff (IS) is negotiating transit agreements with these countries. If all the pieces fall into place, the transit arrangement with Russia would help NATO to reduce its dependence on Pakistan. The IS estimates that shipping by land through Russia could reduce shipping costs from Europe by up to 90 percent. The IS reported that negotiations with Kazakhstan may be near completion (ratification by its parliament is another story), while the Uzbek negotiations are in a preliminary stage but is likely to bear fruit sooner.

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WARSAW PACT EQUIPMENT  
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¶7. (S/NF) Efforts to overhaul former Warsaw Pact equipment donated to Afghanistan from new NATO Allies will be dependent in large measure on both Russia continuing to grant original equipment manufacturer (OEM) licenses to nations (including Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine), and receipt of sufficient repair parts from Russia to complete the overhaul of existing airframes. To date, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Hungary have offered to deploy MI-24P attack and MI-17 transport helicopters to Afghanistan once they are modernized and obtain the requisite spare parts for such a deployment.

¶8. (S/NF) Allied arms provision to Afghanistan of Russian-designed equipment is frustrating to Moscow because it displaces their efforts to gain leverage on Kabul by doing so directly. We could find a middle ground with Moscow and scratch an Afghan itch if we worked a Kabul-Moscow-CSTC-A deal for the Russian provision of aircraft for Kabul's

desired airwing.

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COMMENT - LET SLEEPING DOGS LIE  
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¶8. (S/NF) Fuel sourcing from Russia to both ISAF and OEF is by far the most important Russian support for the mission in Afghanistan. It would be inadvisable to redirect fuel sourcing entirely back through Pakistan for obvious reasons. Russia has indicated that it will continue to support NATO in Afghanistan, and at least for now, Russia focuses in its public comments on land transit (and to a lesser extent air transit), while fuel sourcing remains under the radar. We should let on-going commercial arrangements with Russian sources continue, while refraining from highlighting this issue in political discussions with Russia. At NATO, this includes supporting the continued work of the NATO-Russia Council Logistics Working Group which contributes to Russia-NATO fuel inter-operability. End Comment.  
VOLKER